**1 Policy**

A. This IMPP outlines the FWC’s response to employees who, as a result of responding to or becoming involved in a critical incident, may be in need of peer support or access to mental health services. Public service can often be emotionally demanding and difficult, and members may experience stress and related emotional difficulties. Some emotional reactions may have a negative impact on personnel performance, and in extreme instances, may present a danger to the welfare and safety of employees, their families or the public. Therefore, it is FWC’s policy to provide all commission members and their family’s access to peer support and/or mental health services.

The agency establishes regional Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) teams that provide access to emotional and psychological support to employees. This support and assistance extends to family members when appropriate. Assistance may be accomplished through a broad range of crisis services that include, but are not limited to:

1. Assessment of the situation and the reactions of personnel
2. Individual (one-on-one peer) support services
3. Small group interventions (Defusing, Critical Incident Stress Debriefing)
4. Large group interventions (Rest, Information, and Transition Services (RITS) and Crisis Management Briefings)
5. Family support services
6. Referral, when necessary, to professional assistance programs and/or providers
7. Follow-up services
8. Post-incident education
9. Pre-deployment education, preparation, planning and policy development
10. Strategic crisis response planning

CISM is intended to provide support and assistance during and in the immediate aftermath of critical incidents. CISM has clearly defined notification and initiation procedures, a structured response and post-incident conclusion process. CISM is not intended to provide long-term counseling or other mental health support and is not a substitute for psychotherapy. Employees in need of prolonged assistance shall contact EAP and/or their primary medical care provider.
The CISM Program is administratively housed in the Division of Law Enforcement, but CISM Team Membership is open to all commission employees and CISM services can be accessed by any commission employee.

Confidentiality is the hallmark of the CISM team program. Any statements made by involved members to CISM Team Members in group and individual interventions will be confidential with the following exceptions:

1. If the employee poses a danger to him/herself or others;
2. If the employee has violated a law; and/or
3. If the employee has violated a commission or division policy.

Failure by any CISM Team Member to maintain confidentiality will result in immediate removal from the team and/or disciplinary action up to and including dismissal in accordance with IMPP 6.1 Standards of Disciplinary Actions for Misconduct.

Employees who have been involved in a violation of law or their oath of office shall not rely upon nor expect peer counseling to serve as a means of relieving or diminishing their real or perceived responsibility. Exceptions to the confidentiality rule will be clearly stated to the participants prior to the beginning of any CISM process.

CISM Team Members having knowledge of one of the exceptions will immediately contact the appropriate Regional Commander, who will notify the appropriate Division Director or designee.

It is FWC policy to respect the confidentiality of the Critical Incident Stress Management processes. The agency will not question the individual(s) involved or CISM Team Members regarding the facts surrounding a critical incident debriefing, defusing, or the individual(s) involved, or referrals made to a mental health provider.

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**6.2.1 Definitions**

**Critical Incident** – Any situation that causes members to experience unusually strong emotional reactions that could interfere with their ability to function.

**Family members** – For purposes of this IMPP, family members include, but are not limited to, spouse, fiancé, life partner, parents (including step or foster parents), children or anybody so designated by the member.

**Group Interventions** – Techniques used for Critical Incident Stress Management. Small group interventions include Defusings and Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD), and large group interventions include the provision of Rest, Information, and Transition Services (RITS) and the delivery of Crisis Management Briefings (CMB).
**Critical Incident Stress Debriefing** – A confidential group discussion including members involved in a critical incident and members of the CISM team. The primary purpose of the debriefing is to mitigate the impact of the critical incident. A debriefing is not an operational critique. Debriefings are usually conducted two to three days after an incident has occurred and serve to assist Team Members in providing care, understanding and educational support to affected members.

**Defusing** – A shortened, less formal, version of a debriefing, but more immediate in its application. An individual or group meeting between Team Members and employees involved in a critical incident, which is conducted shortly after an incident. The purpose of a defusing is to provide immediate support and intervention.

**One-on-One Peer Support** – A confidential discussion between a member and a peer support member in matters relating to CISM. Under certain circumstances, peer support may be provided by fellow commission employees who are not Team Members.

**Restoration of Adaptive Function** – A primary goal of CISM. Adaptive function means that personnel have adjusted to and processed the critical incident and have returned to normal function in their personal and professional lives quickly as possible within the context of the event.

**Peer Support Member** – A member of a CISM team who has received the appropriate approved training.

**Mental Health Professional** – A person trained and licensed to provide mental health counseling and treatment services. Mental Health Professionals can be reached by contacting the State of Florida’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 1-800-860-2058.

**Statewide Team Coordinator** – The coordinator is authorized to coordinate the Regional Teams and has the responsibility of establishing training protocols, selection of Team Members and holding regular meetings. The Director of the Division of Law Enforcement chooses the coordinator.

**Assistant Team Coordinator** – The Assistant Team Coordinator shall be a CISM Team Member. The Assistant Team Coordinator shall be selected by agreement of the CISM Team Members, with final approval by their supervisor, the CISM Team Coordinator and Division Director or designee. The Assistant Team Coordinator shall assist the Statewide Team Coordinator and assume the duties and responsibilities of the Statewide Team Coordinator in their absence.

**Team Leaders** – Team Leaders work under the authority of the Statewide Team Coordinator, and direct the activities of members assigned to their team. A Team Leader may serve as the Statewide Team Coordinator during the coordinator's absence.

**Team Members** – Team Members assist employees exhibiting signs of emotional distress as a result of their involvement in critical incidents. Team Members may be assigned to assist an Incident Commander with stress management.

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** – The State of Florida’s Employee Assistance Program is a free employee benefit program intended to help state employees and their household members manage issues that might adversely affect their work performance, health and well-being. EAP counselors typically provide assessment, support and, if needed, referrals to additional resources. More information on Florida’s EAP can be found on the program website accessed through People First or by calling 1-800-860-2058. EAP has Critical Incident Stress Debriefers and other resources available to respond as requested.

**Incident Commander** – The individual responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and the release of resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site.
### 6.2.2 Responsibilities

**A. Regional Commanders** are responsible for establishing a Critical Incident Stress Management Team in their Region in coordination with the Statewide Team Coordinator. Tallahassee Headquarters is included in the Northwest Region.

**B. Statewide Team Coordinator**

1. The Statewide Team Coordinator has the responsibility for coordinating team functions and providing any necessary support to the regional CISM teams.
2. The Statewide Team Coordinator is also responsible for developing and maintaining a selection process for Commission members wishing to serve on a regional CISM team.
3. The Statewide Team Coordinator is responsible for organizing appropriate training providers and programs and ensuring that the appropriate training is attended by all regional teams.

**C. Team Leaders**

1. Team Leaders may be responsible for the following:
   a. **One-on-One Peer Support**
      
      If contacted by an employee with a request for one-on-one peer support, the Team Leader shall identify a peer support member available to provide the requested support and facilitate contact with the requesting employee.
   b. **Critical Incident Scene**
      
      When called to the scene of a critical incident, the Team Leader shall:
      
      Determine the appropriate response to the incident and plan team roles and involvement.
      
      Make contact with involved members, separating them from the scene as soon as such action is approved by the Incident Commander or other authority, and coordinate the small group defusing process as soon as practical.
      
      If needed, the Team Leader shall notify a mental health professional who can determine if there is a need to respond to the scene.
      
      - If the mental health professional chooses to respond, he/she will be briefed on the circumstances of the incident and provided with assistance upon arrival.
      
      The Team Leader will ensure that involved members are allowed contact with family members, if desired.
      
      If family members are invited to join the involved employee, Team Leaders or supervisors may arrange for their transportation.
      
      If possible, the Team Leader will assign a Team Member to each involved member for support and assistance until such time as he/she becomes stabilized.
c. Post- Incident Consideration:

If possible, the Team Leader shall arrange for the transportation of involved members to a location where they are afforded the following considerations:

- Allowed to relax in a stable, private environment;
- Permitted to shower and change clothes (with prior approval from the criminal or administrative investigator in charge of the scene, if applicable);
- Have pastoral or other spiritual needs met; and,
- Have food and drink, if desired.

If an employee is seriously injured or incapacitated, the Team Leader or employee’s supervisor shall coordinate with the Regional Commander or Section Leader to make contact with family members in accordance with General Order 29, Accident Investigations and Death Notification (for Division of Law Enforcement personnel), or appropriate Commission or division/office policy, as applicable.

If appropriate or desired, the Team Leader shall request the response of a mental health professional provided by the State of Florida’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

If appropriate, the Team Leader shall encourage employees to seek follow-up counseling (considered work time) through the State of Florida’s Employee Assistance Program.

Team Leaders ensure that follow-up interventions are conducted as needed, and that CISM Team Members are assigned for these duties as appropriate for the situation.

Team Leaders shall hold quarterly meetings or conference calls with the regional Team Members to discuss mutual issues and concerns, review team activities and update any training as needed.

D. Team Members

1. Team Members do not fix responsibility or blame upon any employee and shall refrain from any discussion involving responsibility or blame to the greatest extent possible.

2. Team Members do not use Defusings and Critical Incident Stress Debriefings to critique an incident.

3. All CISM Team Members, including the Statewide Team Coordinator and Team Leaders, are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the Critical Incident Stress Management processes. A breach of confidentiality (with the exceptions noted in the Policy Section above) will result in dismissal from the team and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal in accordance with IMPP 6.1 Standards of Disciplinary Actions for Misconduct.

**PROCEDURE**

6.2.3 Critical Incident Stress Management Team Activation

Requests for the Critical Incident Stress Management Team are made directly to the regional Team Leader or the Statewide Team Coordinator (if regional Team Leader is unavailable). Team response is determined by the regional Team Leader or Statewide Team Coordinator in consultation with the Regional Commander.
The regional Team Leader must be notified when any of the following incidents occur:

1. Serious injury or death, including suicide, of an employee;
2. Death or serious injury occurs to another person through the action or inaction of an employee (whether on-duty or off-duty);
3. A member becomes involved in any shooting (whether on-duty or off-duty);
4. Casualties have resulted from any incident;
5. Other agencies request CISM assistance, or
6. Any incident, not listed above, that causes unusual distress to personnel, e.g. natural disaster, response to a human-wildlife conflict incident involving serious injury or death to a person, etc.

Any employee may request activation of the CISM Team following a critical incident by contacting the regional Team Leader. The Team Leader will assess the situation and initiate response.

Activation of Team Members may occur when requested by a Regional Commander, Regional Director, any Division or Office Director, Statewide Team Coordinator or Team Leader as a result of any incident that causes unusual distress to personnel.

CISM Team Members who are activated and respond to a critical incident while off-duty shall be credited in accordance with the bargaining agreement applicable to their class, or for actual time worked if the member is not covered by a bargaining agreement.

6.2.4 Workplace Death or Serious Injury

Team Members must recognize the need to maintain the integrity of a criminal or administrative investigation into the facts surrounding a serious injury or death at the workplace.

When notified of such an incident, the Team Leader responds to the scene, makes contact with involved employees and removes them from the scene as soon as such action is approved by the Incident Commander or other authority. The Team Leader also ensures that a mental health professional is notified.

1. The involved employee’s supervisor will make a supervisory referral to the Employee Assistance Program or other approved mental health professional within 24 hours of an incident and will notify the employee of the date and time of the appointment. The supervisory referral is not required if a mental health professional from EAP has already made contact with the involved member.

2. EAP counseling is confidential and is provided at no cost to the employee.

Upon arrival, the mental health professional is briefed by the Team Leader and introduced to the involved employee or employees. Counselors offer their services, and provide instructions for later contact.

The on-duty supervisor or Team Leader may arrange to have family members transported to the debriefing (if the involved member desires).

If possible, a Team Member will be assigned to each involved member for peer support and assistance.
6.2.5 Team Function

A. On-Scene Support

1. The Team Leader will be allowed in or near the command post to act as an observer and liaison between the Critical Incident Stress Management Team and the Incident Commander.

2. When called to a scene, Team Members will act as observers only and are restricted to the outer perimeter area unless otherwise directed by the Team Leader with the permission of the Incident Commander.

3. Any adverse stress reaction observed by a Team Member will be reported to the Team Leader, who then notifies the Incident Commander.

4. If it becomes necessary to conduct a defusing at the scene, it is to be brief and supportive in nature. On-scene group interventions will not be conducted.

B. Off-Scene Support

1. Off-scene defusing sessions are conducted in small group settings. They are conducted within three hours of an incident in a comfortable, quiet location away from the scene.

2. Brief, small group support sessions such as a Defusing are conducted off scene. They are used to reduce stress and tension and to restore personnel to adaptive function in the aftermath of a traumatic event. The longer and more intricate Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, which is described in the next section below, is provided a few days after the event and helps to further reduce stress and enhances unit cohesion and performance.

3. Members are encouraged to speak freely with the CISM team and to discuss their emotions regarding the incident, but shall refrain from any discussion involving responsibility or blame.

4. CISM Team Members will be available at any time to speak with individuals who wish to speak with them privately.

C. Formal Debriefing

1. Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD) are, typically, small group follow-up sessions following defusing and other CISM services. The main goals of CISD are reduction and mitigation of traumatic stress reactions, the restoration of personnel to normal healthy functions and referral for additional services for personnel who may need more formal assistance. CISDs are standard operating procedure, including mandatory attendance of the involved employees, for the following incidents:

   a. Workplace death of an employee

   b. Serious, life-threatening injury to an employee

   c. Suicide of a colleague

   d. Mass casualty or multi-casualty event

   e. Any event that seriously threatened the lives of FWC employees (acts of extreme violence, shootings, hostage situations, barricaded subject with weapons or the use of deadly force). The CISD should be a standard operating procedure in cases in which an uninvolved (unintended casualty) person was killed or injured as a result of the actions of FWC personnel.

   f. Any event that is perceived as extremely unusual, threatening, overwhelming or grotesque by the involved employees.

   g. Any other incident for which agency leadership or the Incident Commander deem CISM response appropriate.
2. The CISD is a guided discussion of a traumatic event in which the participants freely discuss their cognitive, physical, emotional and behavioral reactions to a traumatic event. The Team Members provide support, guidance and information on stress management and recovery from distress.

3. CISDs are generally conducted two to three days after an incident has occurred and are managed by the Team Leader or the Statewide Team Coordinator with the assistance of CISM Team Members.

4. Media representatives or other uninvolved observers are not allowed to attend debriefings. Note-taking, audio or video recording, etc. is not permitted. To ensure maximum attention to the debriefing process, police radios, pagers, cell phones or other interruptions are not permitted.

5. CISDs should be coordinated to facilitate attendance by all of the personnel involved in the traumatic event.

6. The use of rank or authority is not appropriate in a debriefing session.

6.2.6 Post-CISM Response

Upon completion of any CISM activation, Team Members shall complete a CISM after-action report with the following elements:

1. Name of the Team Member(s).
2. General nature of the incident.
3. A brief indication of the type of CISM services the Team Member provided.

The CISM after-action report shall be completed in a timely manner after the incident and CISM response is concluded.

Only one CISM after-action report per incident shall be completed. If multiple Team Members responded to the same incident, the CISM Team Leader or most senior CISM Team Member shall prepare the report.

The CISM after-action report shall be submitted via email to the CISM Statewide Team Coordinator through the regional CISM Team Leader.

CISM after-action reports shall not contain:

1. Any information revealed to the CISM Team Member in confidence.
2. Any detail that identifies a member who used CISM services.

6.2.7 Critical Incident Stress Management Team Selection

Applicants are advised that Team participation is voluntary.

All commission employees are eligible to apply, but may be requested to respond on a 24 hour basis while a member of a Team.

Applicants must have:

1. Strong communication skills, including the ability to be empathetic; and,
2. Ability to successfully complete Team training requirements.
Prior experience is not required to join the CISM Team. However, previous experience, including volunteer service, in law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire service, corrections, social work or telecommunications operations and/or training in crisis intervention is always welcome.

Applicants may be interviewed and assessed for Team suitability as part of the selection process, which may include an interview with Team Members.

### 6.2.8 Minimum Training Requirements

Once selected, CISM Team Members must complete the following prior to participation in and/or conducting interventions:

1. “Individual Crisis Intervention and Peer Support” class recognized by International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF)
2. “CISM: Group Crisis Intervention” class recognized by ICISF

The following courses should be completed within two years of joining the CISM Team.

3. “Advanced Group Crisis Intervention” class recognized by ICISF
4. “Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention” recognized by ICISF

Team Members shall also participate in in-service training opportunities offered annually.

### 3 Forms

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Approved: **Eric Sutton**

Nick Wiley, Executive Director or Designee

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